

## Message Text

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44

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-20 PC-15 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 DRC-01 OMB-01 /168 W

----- 057400

R 071540Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5626

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 4187

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, HO

SUBJECT: INTERNAL LIBERAL PARTY ELECTIONS

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 4036

1. THE LIBERAL PARTY HELD INTERNAL ELECTIONS FOR 84 MUNICIPAL COUNCIL SLATES ON NOVEMBER 4. THE ELECTIONS WERE CARRIED OUT WITHOUT INCIDENT AND THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES DID NOT INTERFERE IN THE ELECTION PROCESS.

2. SAN PEDRO SULA WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT MUNICIPALITY INVOLVED IN THE ELECTIONS. THE "RAMON VILLEDA MORALES" SLATE HEADED BY MARIO CATARINO RIVAS WON 7,058 VOTES TO THE 5,267 VOTES OBTAINED BY THE "LIBERAL VICTORY MOVEMENT" HEADED BY JUAN FERNANDO LOPEZ. RIVAS WAS BACKED BY THE "DEMOCRATIC LEFT" OF THE PARTY LED BY CARLOS ROBERTO REINA WHILE LOPEZ WAS BACKED BY "RODISMO," THATIS, MODESTO RODAS ALVARADO. IN GENERAL, THE SAME STORY WAS REPEATED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY WITH THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT WINNING A LARGE MAJORITY OF THE CONTESTED

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COUNCILS. THIS IS EVEN TRUE OF THE AREA IN SOUTHERN AND

CENTRAL HONDURAS WHICH HAS ALWAYS BEEN RODAS' MAIN BASE OF POWER.

3. COMMENT: ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING ASPECTS OF THE ELECTIONS, PARTICULARLY IN SAN PEDRO SULA, WAS THE AMOUNT OF INTEREST EVIDENCED BY PARTY SUPPORTERS. EVEN THOUGH ONLY INTERNAL PARTY POSITIONS WERE AT STAKE, MORE THAN 13,000 PEOPLE WENT TO THE POLLS. THE TURN-OUT SEEMS TO INDICATE THAT THERE IS STILL STRONG VOTER IDENTIFICATION WITH THE LIBERAL PARTY EVEN THOUGH IT IS NO LONGER RECEIVING A GOVERNMENT SUBSIDY, DOES NOT CONTROL GOVERNMENT JOBS AND HAS NO IMMEDIATE PROSPECTS OF A RETURN TO POWER. THE NON-INTERFERENCE BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES ALSO SEEMS TO SHOW THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS WILLING TO ALLOW THE PARTIES TO FUNCTION AS LONG AS THEY DO NOT HOLD MASS DEMONSTRATIONS OR TAKE DIRECT ACTION AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. ANOTHER OUTCOME OF THE ELECTION IS THAT RODAS IS LOSING SUPPORT AMONGST HIS FORMER FOLLOWERS AND THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT IS GAINING. IN A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH AN EMBOFF REINA STATED HE HAD AN AGREEMENT WITH RODAS TO THE EFFECT THAT WHOEVER WON IN THE NOVEMBER 4 ELECTIONS WOULD BE CONSIDERED THE PARTY'S DE FACTO LEADER AND SPOKESMAN. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE AGREEMENT WILL BE HONORED, IF INDEED IT WAS FRAMED IN SUCH TERMS.

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